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ABSTRACT

Explored with 30 parents of preschool children who demonstrated behavior problems and the teachers who worked with the parents was a method of intervention that demanded limited staff time and provided a systematic approach to counseling parents. Findings suggested the feasibility of using classroom teachers as parent counselors when trained in the use of a systematic behavior recording approach; gave evidence of an effective training procedure requiring less than 2 hours; and demonstrated that parents, when trained and given appropriate feedback from the teacher, can modify their own and their children's behavior without direct and ongoing supervision from a behavior specialist. (SBH)

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A STUDY OF
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AS INTERVENERS
IN PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONAL PATTERNS
USING A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

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Educators have become increasingly interested in involving the family in the child's educational process. This has given rise to exploration of the various roles that may be assumed by the classroom teacher in family involvement. The literature abounds with examples of educational programs that emphasize an expanded view of parent and teacher roles (Karnes, 1968, 1972; Weikart & Lambie, 1968; Horton, 1968; Gordon, 1971; Gray, 1971; Meadow, 1971; Kaufman, 1975). In view of the teacher's strategic position in the life of the child and, hence, the family, the potential influence of the teacher on the mental health of the child and family deserves prime consideration by educational institutions. No other professional has the opportunity, on a daily basis, to impact the parent-child relationship. No other professional has daily contact with the parent and child from the early years. Among the varieties of involvement referred to in the literature, one area of interest has been that of child management and modification of parent-child interactions. Given the teacher's strategic position their potential role as a modifier of parent-child interactional patterns seemed appropriate for investigation.

A review of related research revealed that in methods used to intervene in parent-child interactional problems, a psychologist

usually was involved with the parent and/or child (Bijou, 1963; Lovaas, Freitag, Gold & Kassorla, 1965; Allyn & Azrin, 1965; Hawkins, Peterson, Schweid & Bijou, 1966; Wagner, 1967; Zeilberger, Sampson & Sloane, 1968; Hall, 1972; Herbert & Baer, 1972; Moore & Baily, 1973; and Jones, 1977). The limitations imposed by school programs, such as time, financing, traditional role definitions and academic priorities, make the widespread use of the psychologist prohibitive. In the absence of such specialists preventive intervention in parent-child relationships, becomes a responsibility of the teacher.

The presently reported study explored a method of intervention that demanded limited staff time and provided a systematic approach to counseling with parents. The effectiveness of the approach and its acceptance by teachers and parents were analyzed.

Two general hypotheses were advanced. (1) Teachers will be able to intervene effectively to modify parent-child interactional patterns, and (2) A behavior recording method, used by parents with teachers acting as counselor-consultants, will significantly reduce the incidents of problem behavior in preschool children.

Method

The Ss were 30 parents of preschool children who demonstrated behavior problems and, the teachers who worked with these parents. Fifteen Ss were in an Experimental Group with an equal number in a Control Group. All were middle and upper-middle class Caucasians

residing in two mid-western cities. Children of Experimental Group Parents consisted of 10 males and 5 females ranging in age from 4-0 to 5-0. Children of Control Group Parents were 8 males and 7 females aged 3-4 to 5-2. With the exception of two Experimental Group Children attending a university affiliated program, all attended privately operated preschools.

The experimental behavior modification program was presented to 29 faculties involving 97 teachers. The research population was comprised of 30 teachers volunteering to participate in the Experimental or Control Groups.

Procedure and Experimental Materials

The Experimental Group teachers underwent a 90 minute training session which included the completion of a series of programmed exercises designed to provide experience with the behavior record form that was to be used by the parents. A discussion of the use of recorded behavioral data in parent counseling followed. Then the teachers were given two booklets--the first booklet included practice exercises, and the second gave general suggestions for training parents to record behavioral data and suggestions how the teacher could use the recorded information.

The 15 experimental parents were trained by the teacher to record behavioral data on the record form. After the teacher read to the parent, or after the parent read a trial "situation" from the practice booklet the parent recorded the appropriate data codes as a test of their understanding of the recording procedure. Following this, the

parents were given a pad of 10 Behavior Recording Forms (see Figure 1) and carbon paper. The reverse side of the form included lists of coded behaviors and instructions for recording observed behavior under these codes. The parent recorded three categories of information when the behavior targeted for remediation occurred: Parent Action (how the parent managed the behavior), Parent Activity (what the parent was doing at the time the target behavior occurred) and Alternative Action (an alternate way of managing the behavior if, upon reflection, they felt they should have used another approach). Through the day, at convenient times, Parent Attention (positive attention given the child by the parent when no problem behavior was present) categories were recorded. The parent returned the original copy of the completed form to the teacher each week, retaining the carbon copy. The teacher counseled with the parent, either in person or by telephone, as soon as possible following receipt of the form. The information was recorded for a maximum of four weeks, or five consecutive days with no incidents of target behavior occurring.

The Control Group parents kept a tally of the incidents of the target behavior during the first and fourth weeks of the study. The Control Group teacher was instructed to use any means of counseling with the parent, but could not use the Behavior Recording Form.

Results

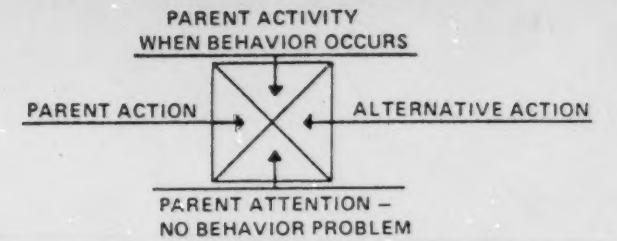
Pretest results indicated a probability of 0.88 that the samples were drawn from the same population. One way ANOVA of incidents of

BEHAVIOR RECORDING FORM A

Name _____

Date _____

Target behavior _____



day \ time	7:00	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00	6:00	7:00	8:00
MON.														
TUE.														
WED.														
THUR.														
FRI.														
SAT.														
SUN.														

BEHAVIOR RECORDING FORM A

A PARENT ACTION: Select from the list below the code number for the action that most nearly describes your handling of the target behavior. Write that number in the left side (A) of the square under the appropriate time and day. If none of these describe what you did, write in the action that you took in one of the blank spaces provided below. Write that code number in the square.

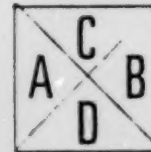
B ALTERNATIVE ACTION: Later, think about the action that you took when the target behavior occurred. Was there an action that you could have taken that you now think would have been better? If so, select the code number of that parent action and write it in the right side (B) of the square. If you think that you handled the behavior in the best way possible, use the same code number that you used in the left side of the square.

PARENT ACTION—ALTERNATIVE ACTION

Code

- 01 Ignored child's behavior
- 02 Guided child's interest to new activity
- 03 Calmly explained reason for not _____
- 04 Confined to room or "time out chair"
- 05 Physically removed child to another area
- 06 Told child his behavior made me unhappy
- 07 Promised treat or privilege for not _____
- 08 Threatened to punish child
- 09 Threatened to tell other parent
- 10 Scolded
- 11 Told child that I was disappointed in him
- 12 Spanked
- 13 _____
- 14 _____
- 15 _____

DIRECTIONS: When the target (undesired) behavior occurs, fill in sections A, B and C in the appropriate day and time cell. Please follow the directions given for each section of the cell.



C PARENT ACTIVITY WHEN THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR OCCURRED: Select the code number of the activity that most nearly describes what you were doing at the time that the behavior occurred. Write that code number in the top section (C) of the square.

PARENT ACTIVITY WHEN BEHAVIOR OCCURS

Code

- 01 Housework (cleaning, dishwashing, etc.)
- 02 Reading or TV watching
- 03 Giving attention to other parent
- 04 Giving attention to brother or sister
- 05 Talking on telephone
- 06 In bathroom
- 07 In store, church or other public place
- 08 Talking with other adult
- 09 Driving auto
- 10 _____
- 11 _____
- 12 _____

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENTS:

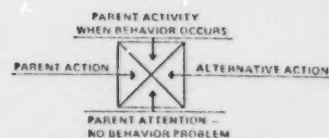
D PARENT ATTENTION WHEN THERE IS NO PROBLEM BEHAVIOR: This includes any attention given to the child when his behavior is not displeasing to you. Select from the list below the attention that you gave, or write in your own. Write the code number in the bottom section (D) of the square in the appropriate time and day cell. You may have several numbers in the bottom section, therefore you should write small.

Code

- 20 Praised for attitude, manners, thoughtfulness, _____
- 21 Pleasant talk with child
- 22 Read story to child
- 23 Praised for doing job without reminder
- 24 Praised for effort even if no success
- 25 Physical affection (kiss, hug, pat, etc.)
- 26 Signs of approval (smile, nodding head)
- 27 Allowed child to help with household activity
- 28 _____
- 29 _____
- 30 _____

BEHAVIOR RECORDING FORM A

Name _____
 Date _____
 Target behavior: _____



day \ time	7:00	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00	6:00	7:00	8:00
MON														
TUE														
WED														
THUR														
FRI														
SAT														
SUN														

W.G. Morgan
 1-1-74

BEHAVIOR RECORDING FORM A

A PARENT ACTION: Select from the list below the code number for the action that most nearly describes your handling of the target behavior. Write that number in the left side (A) of the square under the appropriate time and day. If none of these describe what you did, write in the action that you took in one of the blank spaces provided below. Write that code number in the square.

B ALTERNATIVE ACTION: Later, think about the action that you took when the target behavior occurred. Was there an action that you could have taken that you now think would have been better? If so, select the code number of that parent action and write it in the right side (B) of the square. If you think that you handled the behavior in the best way possible, use the same code number that you used in the left side of the square.

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- Code
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 - 26 Signs of approval (smile, nodding head)
 - 27 Allowed child to help with household activity
 - 28 _____
 - 29 _____
 - 30 _____

Figure 1

target behavior during the first and fourth weeks of the study indicated a significant main effect, $F(1, 28) = 8.37, p > .01$. Both hypotheses were confirmed: (1) Teachers were able to intervene, in lieu of the behavior specialist, to modify parent-child interactional patterns and (2) the experimental method, with the parent as principal intervener and recorder of behavioral data, and the teacher as counselor-consultant, effectively reduced the incidents of problem behavior in preschool children. The problem behavior was reduced from 187 incidents to 43 during the four-week period, with a mean reduction of 9.6 per parent per week.

All teachers expressed an understanding of the rationale and procedures involved in the experimental method; they were able to train parents to record on the record form with a percentage error of only 0.03, indicating effective teacher and parent training procedures. Teachers responded that they were able to use the recorded behavioral data as an aid in parent counseling in the manner prescribed. All teachers felt their parent counseling techniques had improved as a result of their knowledge of the experimental method. They indicated that they were able to give more specific assistance, be more objective, and were more able to identify problems and changes in parent child management patterns.

Parents also felt that their child management techniques had improved. They felt that they were less emotional in their approach and able to follow a plan of action in managing the problem behavior. They also felt they were more consistent in their relationship with

their children. They evidenced a mean increase in incidents of positive attention given to their children of 9.53 per parent per week. All indicated that they used the new techniques with other problems and other children.

Null results were recorded in two instances. Forty percent of the teachers felt that the experimental method made unreasonable demands on their time, $\chi^2(1) = 0.27, p > .05$. Only 60 percent of the teachers indicated transference of experimental method techniques to non-study parents, $\chi^2(1) = 0.27, p > .05$.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest the feasibility of using classroom teachers as parent counselors when trained in the use of a systematic behavior recording approach. Results give evidence of an effective training procedure requiring less than two hours. It was demonstrated that parents, when trained and given appropriate feedback from the teacher, can modify their own, and their children's behavior without direct and ongoing supervision from a behavior specialist. The results of this study are considered under the following areas:

Classroom teachers

In view of the teachers' potential to make a significant contribution to the mental health of the child and his family, there is a need for increased effort in the area of parent counseling. There is

strong implication for the classroom teacher to do preventive counseling with parents of children with behavior problems which possibly could pre-empt more serious problems in later childhood. The teacher, more than any other professional, is in a key position to detect childhood problems and to provide early intervention.

Administrators

Educational programs reflect an increasing awareness of the need for the parents and the schools to work together in order to maximize the quality of life for the child and the family. Since research indicates the feasibility of the use of classroom teachers for parent counseling, it follows that administrators should give consideration to the inclusion of released time for teachers to counsel with parents. Implicit in this is both moral and tangible support at the administrative levels for the teachers' counseling efforts.

Training Materials and Method

Results of the study support the effectiveness of the materials and training method used. The method provides teachers and parents with experience with materials and verbal and visual feedback. This combination of materials and procedures may hold promise for use in other training efforts.

Need for Further Research

The following questions should be researched before final judgment is made of the value of the program as an aid in teacher-parent

counseling. Can this method be used by public school programs and teachers to improve their counseling approaches with parents? Can non-Caucasian and low socioeconomic parents use this method to change the behavior of their child? Will comparable results be achieved with older children?

A study should be made of teacher attitude toward parent counseling. Although there are general assumptions regarding teachers' reluctance to accept the parent counseling role, there is no empirical data to support these assumptions.

Informal comments from public school teachers indicate that the wording of the instructions on the Behavior Recording Form should be revised. There was belief that the instructions would not be clearly understood by many of the parents of their students.

In conclusion, the Behavior Recording Method yielded results that generally supported its efficacy in reducing child behavior problems. Of more general significance, the results serve to suggest that teachers, not trained in parent counseling, can be effective parent counselors without ongoing supervision or consultation with a behavior specialist. The need for expanding the role of teachers of young children is indicated. Teachers have the potential of assisting the child in his "search for coherence" (Piaget, 1969) by assuming greater role in parent counseling.

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